

Open Workshop

Creating and Sustaining an Innovative Culture within a Regulatory Agency Workshop

The Watershed Approach

Since passage of the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act more than 25 years ago, our nation has made significant progress in protecting and restoring the physical, chemical and biological integrity of our waters. The Cuyahoga River in Cleveland and the Potomac River in Washington, D.C. are just two examples of rivers that were badly degraded in the 1970s that now support recreational fishing. Much of this progress is attributable to the control of pollution from industry and sewage treatment plants. However, persistent issues remain related to non-point sources, sewer overflows and habitat degradation.

Today's problems require more creative, comprehensive solutions. For the past nine years, EPA has joined with others to promote the watershed approach nationally as a means to further restore and maintain the physical, chemical and biological quality of our Nation's waters. In particular, EPA has been working with federal, state, and tribal governments to tailor activities and services to local watersheds and their groups, and to involve all the affected interests in designing and implementing goals for the watershed. For a federal agency with a strong regulatory tradition, this is a new way of doing business. Taking on the role of community helper and partner has been a challenge. As with any change of this magnitude, there has been a lot of trial and error, and important lessons have been learned by us, and our many partners, that are worth sharing.

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